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ABSTRACT

A national study of superintendents reveals that most superintendents (89.6 percent) consider their relationship with the community to be very important, and most (63.5 percent) spend a great deal of time on that relationship. There is a positive correlation between the importance superintendents assign to their relationship to the community and 24 task variables. A study in Alaska revealed that all (100 percent) superintendents surveyed consider their community relations very important and that most (60.8 percent) spend much time maintaining these relations. In Alaska there is a positive correlation between the importance superintendents assign to their relationship with the community and six task variables. Personal experiential variables (age, race, sex, etc.) appear to have no effect on the importance the superintendents assign to their relationship with the community, or how much time they spend on it, in either the nationwide or the Alaskan study. The paper provides a list of 15 strategies for community relations to be used by superintendents, 12 tables, and a short bibliography. (MD)

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# SUPERINTENDENT-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES AND ALASKA

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SUPERINTENDENT-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP IN

THE UNITED STATES AND ALASKA

Superintendent is an important member of the community and is the leader of the school system. In public school administration, community is a major reference group with which the superintendents have to work with. There is some direct control of power figures in the community over the superintendent.[1] Chief school administrators lose their jobs most often because of their inability to deal effectively with the community rather than because of a lack of academic competence.[2]

Education is a community concern.[3] Schools are public institutions, and are governed by representatives of the community.[4] The social make-up and size of a community

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[1]Donald J. McCarty A Study of Community Factors Related to the Turnover of Superintendents -- Community Power, School Board Structure, and the Role of the Chief School Administrator ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 014 130, 1967.

[2]Frank C. Mayer and Harold E. Wilson The Effective Superintendent: Techniques and Practices (Midland, Michigan: Pendall Publishing Company, 1972), p. 183.

[3]Kristen Amundson Business and Industry: Partners in Education (Arlington, Va: American Association of School Administrators), 1984, p. 7.

[4]Kristen Amundson Citizens and the Schools: Partners in Education (Arlington, Va: American Association of School Administrators), 1984, p. 11.

influence community perception of the superintendent and his role. Superintendents in large urban areas have the services of many advisers and access to the public via forms of mass media. The rural superintendent, on the other hand, must spend innumerable hours in small public meetings assuming a personal relationship with the people and leadership of his community.[5]

Data analysis of the national study reveals that nationwide most of the superintendents (89.6%) considers their relationship with the community is very important to them, 98.3% of the superintendents said it is medium to very important, only 1.7% said the relationship with the community is of little importance to them.[6] See Table 1.

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[5]Donald L. Kruzner, King County Superintendent of Schools, Seattle, Washington The Superintendent as a Community Educational Leader A paper presented at the annual convention of the American Association of School Administrators at Atlantic City on May 2, 1965. ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 020 827, 1968, p. 1.

[6]Krishan Chand, Job Satisfaction of Superintendents in the United States" (Ed.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1982).

These data are derived from the data collected for the said dissertation. This reference also applies to tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

TABLE 1

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY (NATIONWIDE)

| Importance | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Little | 1 | 4 | .7 |
| | 2 | 5 | 1.0 |
| | 3 | 45 | 8.7 |
| | 4 | 203 | 39.0 |
| Very | 5 | 263 | 50.6 |
| | Total | 520 | 100.0 |

About sixty three percent (63.5%) of the superintendents in the nation reported they spend a great deal of time on their relationship with the community, 92.2% of the superintendents said they spend medium to a great deal of time, only 7.8% of the superintendents said they spend only a little time on their relationship with the community.[7] See Table 2.

TABLE 2

TIME SPENT ON RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY (NATIONWIDE)

| Time spent | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Little | 1 | 7 | 1.3 |
| | 2 | 34 | 6.5 |
| | 3 | 149 | 28.7 |
| | 4 | 212 | 40.8 |
| Great Deal | 5 | 118 | 22.7 |
| | Total | 520 | 100.0 |

[7]Ibid.

Nationwide 90.4 percent of the superintendents have positive feelings, 1.2 percent have negative feelings, and 8.4 percent have medium or neutral feelings about their status as superintendent in the community.[8] See Table 3.

TABLE 3

STATUS IN THE COMMUNITY
(NATIONWIDE)

| Feelings | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Negative | 1 | 3 | .6 |
| | 2 | 3 | .6 |
| | 3 | 44 | 8.4 |
| | 4 | 237 | 45.6 |
| Positive | 5 | 233 | 44.8 |
| | Total | 520 | 100.0 |

EFFECT OF TASK VARIABLES
(NATIONWIDE)

Two statistical techniques, canonical correlation and multiple/correlation analysis revealed that, nationwide there is a positive relationship between the importance the superintendents give to their relationship with the community and 24 task variables: (1) importance superintendents give to their relationship with the teachers, (2) importance they give to their relationship with the non-certified staff, (3) importance they give to their relationship with the board-members,

[8]Ibid.

(4) time they spend on their relationship with the community, (5) the feelings the superintendents have concerning their status in the community, (6) importance they give to their relationship with the principals, (7) importance they give to their freedom to employ staff, (8) importance they give to their relationship with assistants, (9) importance they give to their freedom to dismiss staff, (10) importance they give to school finance, (11) time they spend on their relationship with the board-members, (12) time they spend on their relationship with teachers, (13) importance they give to their relationship with state department of education, (14) feelings they have about renewal of their employment contract, (15) time they spend on their relationship with principals, (16) time they spend on their relationship with non-certified staff, (17) the attitude of parents towards education, (18) the attitude of community towards education, (19) the feelings they have about their achievement in the profession, (20) recognition of their work by others, (21) time they spend on their relationship with the assistants, (22) opportunity for personal growth, (23) their safety on job, and (24) importance they give to curriculum. Coefficient of correlations between importance the superintendents give to their relationship with the community and the stated task variables are given in table 4.

TABLE 4

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AND TASK VARIABLES (NATIONWIDE)

| Dependent Variable= Relationship with Community | r |
|---|---|
| Relationship with teachers | .6 |
| Relationship with non-certified staff | .6 |
| Relationship with board-members | .6 |
| Time spent with the community | .5 |
| Status in the community | .4 |
| Relationship with principals | .4 |
| Freedom to employ staff | .4 |
| Relationship with assistants | .4 |
| Freedom to dismiss staff | .4 |
| School finance | .3 |
| Time spent with board-members | .3 |
| Time spent with teachers | .3 |
| Relationship with state department | .3 |
| Renewal of their employment contract | .3 |
| Time spent with principals | .3 |
| Time spent with non-certified staff | .3 |
| Attitude of parents towards education | .3 |
| Attitude of community towards education | .3 |
| Achievement in the profession | .3 |
| Recognition of work by others | .3 |
| Time spent with the assistants | .3 |
| Opportunity for personal growth | .3 |
| Safety on job | .2 |
| Curriculum | .2 |

n = 520

The other task variables do not have any effect on the importance the superintendents give to their relationship with the community. It does not matter if he has negative or positive feelings about the number of hours put in at work per week, amount of paper work with which he deals, and methods used to evaluate his performance.

It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) state regulations, (2) federal regulations, and (3) collective negotiations. It does not matter how much time he spends on: (1) curriculum, (2) finance, (3) freedom to employ staff, (4) freedom to dismiss staff, and (5) relationship with the state department of education. It does not matter whether he would or would not choose the superintendency again, as to the importance he gives to his relationship with the community.

There is also a positive relationship nationwide between the time spent by the superintendents on their relationship with the community and 15 task variables: (1) time spent on relationship with the non-certified staff, (2) time spent on relationship with the teachers, (3) importance they give to their relationship with the community, (4) time spent on relationship with the board-members, (5) time spent on their relationship with the principals, (6) time spent on relationship with the state department of education, (7) their status as superintendent in the community, (8) methods used to evaluate their performance, (9) time spent on their relationship with the assistants, (10) importance

they give to their relationship with the teachers, (11) importance they give to their relationship with the non-certified staff, (12) attitude of community towards education, (13) their sense of achievement in the profession, (14) opportunity for personal growth, and (15) renewal of his employment contract. Coefficient of correlations between the time they spend on their relationship with the community and the stated task variables are given in table 5.

TABLE 5

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TIME-SPENT ON COMMUNITY-RELATIONS AND TASK VARIABLES (NATIONWIDE)

| Dependent Variable = Time spent on Relationship with the Community | r |
|---|---|
| Time spent with non-certified staff | .6 |
| Time spent with teachers | .5 |
| Relationship with the community | .5 |
| Time spent on relationship with the board | .4 |
| Time spent on relationship with principals | .4 |
| Time spent with state department of education | .4 |
| Status in the community | .4 |
| Methods used to evaluate their performance | .3 |
| Time spent with assistants | .3 |
| Relationship with teachers | .3 |
| Relationship with non-certified staff | .3 |
| Attitude of community towards education | .3 |
| Sense of achievement in the profession | .2 |
| Opportunity for personal growth | .2 |
| Renewal of employment contract | .2 |

n = 520

The other task variables do not have any effect on the time the superintendents spend on their relationship with the community. It does not matter if he has negative or positive feelings about the attitude of parents towards education, recognition of work by others, number of hours put in at work per week, amount of paper work with which he deals, and his safety on job.

It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) curriculum, (20 finance, (3) state regulations, (4) federal regulations, (5) his freedom to employ staff, (6) his freedom to dismiss staff, and (7) collective negotiations. It does not matter how much importance he places on: (1) relationship with the board-members, (2) relationship with assistants, (3) relationship with principals, and (4) relationship with the state department of education. It does not matter whether he would or would not choose the superintendency again, as to the time he spends on his relationship with the community.

A positive relationship exists nationwide between the status of the superintendents in the community and 19 task variables: (1) attitude of community towards education, (2) recognition of their work by others, (3) their sense of achievement in the profession, (4) attitude of parents towards education, (5) renewal of their employment contract, (6) opportunity for personal growth, (7) importance they give to their relationship with the community, (8) their

safety on job, (9) methods used to evaluate their performance, (10) time they spend on their relationship with the community, (11) importance they give to their relationship with the board-members, (12) importance they give to their relationship with the non-certified staff, (13) importance they give to their freedom to employ staff, (14) number of hours they put in at work per week, (15) importance they give to their relationship with the assistants, (16) importance they give to their relationship with the principals, (17) importance they give to their relationship with the teachers, (18) importance they give to the school finance, and (19) time they spend on their relationship with the principals. Coefficient of correlations between the status of the superintendents in the community and the stated task variables are given in table 6.

TABLE 6

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STATUS AND TASK VARIABLES (NATIONWIDE)

| Dependent Variable = Status in the Community | r |
|---|---|
| Attitude of community towards education | .5 |
| Recognition of their work by others | .5 |
| Achievement in the profession | .5 |
| Attitude of parents towards education | .5 |
| Renewal of their employment contract | .4 |
| Opportunity for personal growth | .4 |
| Relationship with the community | .4 |
| Methods used to evaluate performance | .4 |

TABLE 6-Continued

| | |
|---|---|
| Time spent on relationship with community | .4 |
| Relationship with board-members | .4 |
| Relationship with non-certified staff | .4 |
| Freedom to employ staff | .3 |
| Number of hours put in at work per week | .3 |
| Relationship with the assistants | .3 |
| Relationship with the principals | .3 |
| Relationship with the teachers | .3 |
| School finance | .3 |
| Time spent on relationship with principals | .2 |

n = 520

The other task variables do not have any effect on the status of the superintendents in the community. It does not matter if he has negative or positive feelings about the amount of paper work with which he deals and their safety on job. It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) curriculum, (2) state regulations, (3) federal regulations, (4) his freedom to dismiss staff, (5) collective negotiations, and (6) his relationship with the state department of education. It does not matter how much time he spends on: (1) finance, (2) his freedom to employ staff, (3) relationship with board-members, (4) relationship with assistants, (5) relationship with teachers, and (6) relationship with non-certified staff. It does not matter whether he would

or would not choose the superintendency again, as to his status as superintendent in the community.

Data derived from a study of the Alaskan school superintendents reveals that all the superintendents in the state (100%) considers their relationship with the community is very important to them.[9] See Table 7.

TABLE 7

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY (IN ALASKA)

| Importance | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Little | 1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | 2 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | 3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | 4 | 12 | 26.8 |
| Very | 5 | 34 | 73.2 |
| | Total | 46 | 100.0 |

About sixty percent (60.8%) of the superintendents in the state of Alaska reported they spend a great deal of their time on their relationship with the community, 26.2 percent said they spend medium deal of time, only 11% of the superintendents said they spend only a little time on their relationship with the community.[10] See Table 8.

[9]Krishan Chand Job Satisfaction of Alaska School Superintendents and its Comparison with the Nationwide American Superintendency ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 226 483, 1983.

These data are derived from the data collected for the said study. This reference also applies to tables 8-12.

[10]Ibid.

TABLE 8

TIME SPENT ON RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY (IN ALASKA)

| Time spent | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Little 1 | 1 | 2.2 |
| 2 | 5 | 10.8 |
| 3 | 12 | 26.2 |
| 4 | 14 | 30.4 |
| Great Deal 5 | 14 | 30.4 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 |

Statewide 86.9 percent of the superintendents have positive feelings, 6.6 percent have negative feelings, and 6.5 percent have medium or neutral feelings about their status as superintendent in the community.[11] See Table 9.

TABLE 9

STATUS IN THE COMMUNITY (IN ALASKA)

| Feelings | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Negative 1 | 1 | 2.2 |
| 2 | 2 | 4.4 |
| 3 | 3 | 6.5 |
| 4 | 22 | 47.8 |
| Positive 5 | 18 | 39.1 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 |

[11] Ibid.

## EFFECT OF TASK VARIABLES (IN ALASKA)

Two statistical techniques, canonical correlations and multiple/correlation analysis revealed that, statewide there is a positive relationship between the importance the superintendents give to their relationship with the community and six task variables: (1) importance they give to their freedom to employ staff, (2) importance they give to their freedom to dismiss staff, (3) opportunity for personal growth, (4) time they spend to dismiss the staff, (5) importance they give to their relationship with the teachers, and (6) time they spend on their relationship with the community. Coefficient of correlations between importance the superintendents give to their relationship with the community and the stated task variables are given in table 10.

TABLE 10

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AND TASK VARIABLES (IN ALASKA)

| Dependent Variable = Relationship with Community | r |
|---|---|
| Freedom to employ staff | .6 |
| Freedom to dismiss staff | .6 |
| Opportunity for personal growth | .3 |
| Time spent to dismiss staff | .3 |
| Relationship with teachers | .3 |
| Time spent on relationship with community | .3 |

n = 46

The other task variables do not have any effect on the importance the superintendents in Alaska give to their relationship with the community. It does not matter if he has negative or positive feelings about his status as superintendent in the community, attitude of community towards education, attitude of parents towards education, sense of achievement in the profession, recognition of work by others, number of hours put in at his work per week, amount of paper work with which he deals, methods used to evaluate his performance, renewal of his employment contract, and his safety on job.

It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) curriculum, (2) finance, (3) state regulations, (4) federal regulations, (5) collective negotiations, (6) relationship with board-members, (7) relationship with assistants, (8) relationship with principals, (9) relationship with non-certified staff, and (10) relationship with state department of education. It does not matter whether he would or would not choose the superintendency again, as to the importance he gives to his relationship with the community.

There is also a positive relationship statewide in Alaska between the time spent by the superintendents on their relationship with the community and 22 task variables: (1) time spent on their relationship with the board-members, (2) sense of achievement in the profession, (3) time spent on their relationship with the teachers, (4) time spent on

relationship with the non-certified staff, (5) time spent on finance, (6) importance they give to their freedom to dismiss the staff, (7) time spent on their relationship with the principals, (8) overall satisfaction as a superintendent, (9) recognition of his work by others, (10) number of hours put in at work per week, (11) renewal of employment contract, (12) his safety on job, (13) time spent on relationship with assistants, (14) importance they give to their relationship with the non-certified staff, (15) methods used to evaluate their performance, (16) importance they give to their freedom to employ staff, (17) time spent on employing the staff, (18) time spent on dismissal of staff, (19) importance they give to their relationship with the board-members, (20) importance they give to their relationship with the principals, (21) importance they give to their relationship with the state department of education, and (22) time spent on their relationship with the state department of education. Coefficient of correlations between the time they spend on their relationship with the community and the stated task variables are given in table 11.

TABLE 11

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TIME-SPENT ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND TASK VARIABLES (IN ALASKA)

| Dependent Variable = Time spent on Relationship with the Community | r |
|---|---|
| Time spent on relationship with board | .7 |
| Achievement in the profession | .6 |
| Time spent on relationship with teachers | .6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Time spent on relationship with the non-certified staff | .6 |
| Time spent on school finance | .5 |
| Freedom to dismiss staff | .5 |
| Time spent on relationship with principals | .5 |
| Overall satisfaction as superintendent | .5 |
| Recognition of work by others | .5 |
| Number of hours put in at work per week | .4 |
| Renewal of employment contract | .4 |
| Safety on job | .4 |
| Time spent on relationship with assistants | .4 |
| Importance given to relationship with the non-certified staff | .4 |
| Methods used to evaluate their performance | .4 |
| Importance given to freedom to employ staff | .3 |
| Time spent on employing staff | .3 |
| Time spent to dismiss staff | .3 |
| Importance given to their relationship with the board-members | .3 |
| Importance given to their relationship with the principals | .3 |
| Importance they give to their relationship with the state department of education | .3 |
| Time spent on their relationship with the state department of education | .3 |

n = 46

The other task variables do not have any effect on the time the superintendents in Alaska spends on their relationship with the community. It does not matter if

he has negative or positive feelings about his status in the community, attitude of community towards education, attitude of parents towards education, his opportunity for personal growth, and amount of paper work with which he deals. It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) curruculum, (2) state regulations, (3) federal regulations, (4) collective negotiations, and (5) relationship with the teachers. It does not matter how much importance he places on: (1) finance and (2) relationship with the assistants. It does not matter whether he would or would not choose the superintendency again, as to the time he spends on his relationship with the community.

A positive relationship exists statewide in Alaska between the status of the superintendents in the community and 10 task variables: (1) renewal of employment contract, (2) safety on job, (3) recognition of work by others, (4) methods used to evaluate his performance, (5) importance given to their relationship with the principals, (7) overall satisfaction as superintendent, (8) time spent on relationship with assistants, (9) importance given to the relationship with the community, and (10) attitude of parents towards community. Coefficient of correlations between the status of the superintendents in Alaska and the stated task variables are given in table 12.

TABLE 12

COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STATUS AND TASK VARIABLES (IN ALASKA)

| Dependent Variable= Status in the Community | $r$ |
|---|---|
| Renewal of employment contract | .6 |
| Safety on job | .6 |
| Recognition of work by others | .5 |
| Methods used to evaluate performance | .5 |
| Relationship with principals | .5 |
| Time spent on relationship with principals | .5 |
| Overall satisfaction as superintendent | .4 |
| Time spent on relationship with assistants | .3 |
| Relationship with community | .3 |
| Attitude of parents towards education | .3 |

n = 46

The other task variables do not have any effect on the status of the Alaskan superintendents in the community. It does not matter if he has negative or positive feelings about attitude of community towards education, his sense of achievement in the profession, his opportunity for personal growth, number of hours put in at work per week, and amount of paper work with which he deals. It does not matter how much importance he places on or how much time he spends on: (1) curriculum, (2) finance, (3) state regulations, (4) federal regulations, (5) freedom to employ staff, (6) freedom to dismiss staff, (7) collective negotiations, (8) relationship with board-members, (9) relationship with teachers, (10) relationship with non-certified staff, and

(11) relationship with the state department of education. It does not matter whether he would or would not choose the superintendency again, as to his status as superintendent in the community.

## EFFECT OF PERSONAL-EXPERIENTIAL VARIABLES

None of the personal-experiential variables appears to have any effect on how much importance the superintendents give or how much time they spend on their relationship with the community or on the status of the superintendents in the community nationwide and also in the state of Alaska.

It does not matter whether he is employed by an elementary, junior high, senior high school, or a K-12 school district; it does not matter if he is working for an urban, suburban, or rural school district; it does not matter if he is working for a fiscally dependent or independent district; it does not matter how many people are employed in the district. Nor does it matter if a superintendent has a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or a higher degree. It does not matter what is his area of certification nor does it matter what has been his experience as an educator/non educator.

The superintendent's age, race, marital status, sex, whether or not his spouse works, or if he takes an active part in extra curricular activities involving youth do not have any noticeable influence on how much importance the superintendents give or how much time they spend on their relationship with the community.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS STRATEGIES

* Assign an administrator to coordinate district-wide community relations activities.
* Form staff-community advisory committees for various subject areas, each building, and region.
* Support PTA's and other activities for citizen involvement.
* Publish periodicals, reports, and news letters on community activities of the district. Use all the available media to inform the citizens about the school programs.
* Involve volunteers in tutoring, counseling, speakers bureaus, and other programs.
* Strengthen relationship with board, assistants, principals, teachers, non-certified staff, parents, and students.
* Visit all the schools during the school year.
* Take an active part in the community activities.
* Strengthen cross-cultural education and minority programs.
* Keep good organizational climate in the district.
* Maintain quality educational programs and emphasize on student achievement.
* Encourage student activities in which student, teachers, and parents participate together.
* Make sure that people get warm reception when they visit the schools, central office, and school staff.
* Use all other suitable formal and informal strategies consisting of academic and non-academic activities.
* Avoid strikes and other conflicts.

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